

ITEM 11a

Somerset Rivers Authority Board Paper (for information)

Bridgwater Tidal Barrier

Purpose of the item

To update the Board on progress in obtaining the legal power to enable the construction of the Tidal Barrier and associated works which is the Transport and Works Act Order.

Background and context

The Environment Agency and Sedgemoor District Council are working in partnership to deliver a tidal barrier and improvements to downstream defences to better protect Bridgwater and downstream communities. It will reduce tidal flood risk to 11,300 homes and 1,500 businesses.

Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) Application

The TWAO application was submitted to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) Secretary of State on 19 December 2019. Following the consultation period, the time period to secure the withdrawal of objections and resolution of issues raised in representations was extended until 31 July 2020, mainly to allow for the extra difficulty in engagement with stakeholders during Covid19 lockdown. The decision on whether the TWAO should be determined by Public Inquiry or through formal Written Representations rests with the Defra Secretary of State. A Public Inquiry must be held if statutory objectors, for example landowners and utilities, wish to be heard.

Effective engagement resulted in all statutory objections either being withdrawn or statutory objectors advising the Secretary of State that they were content for outstanding issues to be resolved through the process of Written Representations. **On 31 July the Secretary of State confirmed his decision that the TWAO will be determined through the process of Written Representations.**

Written Representations procedure

The formal written representation process started on 1 August with the Environment Agency preparing responses for Defra to send to all those who made representations (anticipated early September). There will be exchanges of representations made through Defra until Defra decides it is appropriate to conclude with report writing and the decision on whether the Order can be granted.

The TWAO decision from the Secretary of State is not anticipated until June – September 2021. During this time the Environment Agency will continue to develop details of the scheme.

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